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G OVERNMENT YOUTH CORPS

by

Helen B. Shaffer

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RICHARD M. BOECKEL, *Editor*

BUEL W. PATCH, *Associate Editor*

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GOVERNMENT YOUTH CORPS

PRESIDENT-ELECT John F. Kennedy's support of proposals for creation of a Youth Peace Corps to serve in underdeveloped countries, in conjunction with the foreign aid program, has had an electrifying effect on the college campuses which would supply most of the recruits for such a corps. The apparent readiness of large numbers of young college men to volunteer for overseas duty of this kind has, in turn, bolstered general advocacy of the plan. Meanwhile, problems presented by growing numbers of idle, out-of-school teen-agers have added urgency to calls for creation of a Youth Conservation Corps to serve within the United States. A proposal to that end received Senate approval in 1959 but was not brought to a vote in the House of Representatives.

The two proposals differ in objectives and each would draw from different strata of young people, but both exemplify a new trend in public programs for American youth. Both would give young people opportunities to contribute services of value to society and would reduce their dependence on services provided by others. Serious consideration of both is expected in the new Congress.

STRONG STUDENT RESPONSE TO KENNEDY PROPOSAL

Sen. Kennedy's statement in Washington last Oct. 5 that, if elected, he would explore the possibility of forming a Youth Peace Corps to render services to new nations around the globe, gave unexpected support to already growing sentiment for an undertaking of this sort. When the candidate mentioned the subject again, during a campaign appearance in mid-October at the University of Michigan, students there were so fired by the idea that they formed an organization, which they called Americans Committed to World Responsibility, to help prepare themselves for such overseas service.

Some 25 other colleges and universities have expressed interest in forming similar organizations. The Michigan

group, which enjoys the support of numerous faculty members, has drawn hundreds of students to its meetings. On Dec. 9-10 it held a symposium on "The Peace Corps and World Responsibility" at which more than a score of faculty members conducted seminars on foreign areas which would be served by the proposed corps.

The enthusiasm of the Michigan students led Kennedy to repeat the proposal, this time in more detail, in a formal speech at San Francisco five days before the election. Since then, support for the idea has snowballed, not only among college students and teachers but also among organizations, including private foundations, churches and labor unions particularly interested in extension of aid to underdeveloped countries.

Attention had been directed to the possibilities in this field by the introduction of Youth Corps bills in the 1960 session of Congress by the late Sen. Richard L. Neuberger (D Ore.),¹ Sen. Hubert H. Humphrey (D Minn.), and Rep. Henry S. Reuss (D Wis.). All three members of Congress received numerous letters of support, chiefly from college students and young graduates, and from veterans who felt that their talents had been either wasted or neglected in military service. Humphrey told the Senate last June 15 that in the two years he had been discussing the proposal it had invariably "received an overwhelmingly favorable response."

Kennedy has received more than a thousand letters in support of the Peace Corps plan.² A report from the Institute of International Education, containing a plan for "practical implementation" of the proposal, was sent to the President-elect a week before Christmas. The U.S. National Student Association, representing more than a million students in 375 universities and colleges, has registered its support.

Student leaders from 42 institutions of higher education met at Princeton in November to study opportunities for overseas service under government or voluntary programs. Robert R. Bowie, director of the Center for International

¹ The senator's widow, Maurine Neuberger, voiced support of the Peace Corps proposal during her successful campaign in Oregon for her husband's Senate seat.

² Including a petition from 500 Amherst students. Five hundred Lehigh University students wrote Reuss that they would be willing to serve in the corps. A group of Antioch College students petitioned Chairman J. William Fulbright (D Ark.) of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last year to act favorably on corps legislation then pending.

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Affairs at Harvard, told the Senate Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery on Nov. 3 that "A thousand or more seniors coming out of college could be recruited every year to do most anything for two or three years in one of the underdeveloped countries." Bowie, former chief of the State Department's policy planning staff, said the recruits would not "expect to make this their career and certainly not make any money out of it." They would simply "want to feel they are being useful."³

PENDING STUDIES OF VARIOUS YOUTH CORPS PLANS

In his first campaign utterance on the subject, in early October, Kennedy said the nation should consider "the possibility of utilizing the services of the very best of our trained and qualified young people to give from three to five years of their lives to the cause of world peace by forming themselves into the Youth Peace Corps, going to the places that really need them and doing the sort of jobs that need doing."

Such an example of young Americans helping young nations to pioneer new fields on the world's underdeveloped frontiers would . . . be not only a great assistance to such nations and a great example to the world, but the greatest possible growing experience for the new generation of American leadership which must inevitably lead the free world coalition.

Such service, Kennedy said, would be so much in the national interest that young men who enrolled in the corps might be excused from the military draft.

The Mutual Security Act of 1960 incorporated the bill proposed by Neuberger and Reuss directing the President to arrange for a non-governmental study of the "advisability and practicability" of establishing a "Point Four Youth Corps" to participate in technical assistance programs in the underdeveloped countries. The House Committee on Foreign Affairs said in its report on the proposal that it was "convinced that there is a significant number of young Americans trained in agriculture, home economics, and other practical fields of activity who recognize the importance of world problems, particularly those of the less developed countries," and that among these youths "are many who are motivated more by a desire to serve than to advance their careers."

³ The dean of the International Service School at American University, Washington, D. C., has estimated that his classes alone would provide from 10 to 20 volunteers a year.

Sen. Humphrey—Senate Majority Whip in the new Congress—introduced a bill last June to establish “a peace corps of young men to assist the peoples of underdeveloped areas of the world to learn the basic skills necessary to combat poverty, disease, illiteracy and hunger.” Humphrey said he felt there was “sufficient evidence . . . to justify moving directly to the formation of such a corps now, rather than waiting for a study to be made.”

Shortly after the election, Rep. Adam Clayton Powell (D N.Y.), slated to become chairman of the House Labor and Education Committee, put members to work studying legislative proposals in the committee's field, including bills to establish both a peace corps and a conservation corps. Reports on the studies were made at a pre-session meeting of the committee on Dec. 14. The International Cooperation Administration announced, Dec. 6, that a contract for the study of the peace corps proposal provided for by the Mutual Security Act had been granted to Colorado State University, which had assigned the project to its Research Foundation directed by Maurice Albertson. Foundation representatives immediately started interviewing members of governmental and private groups engaged in foreign assistance programs. They met also with leading authorities on foreign relations at the Rockefeller Foundation in New York and at the Brookings Institution in Washington.⁴ A final report is scheduled for completion by May 1, but preliminary findings are promised by mid-February.

PEACE CORPS AND PROMOTION OF PRO-AMERICANISM

The main impetus behind proposals for a Peace Corps comes from a widespread belief that this country's foreign aid program, costly and extensive as it has been, has failed to make friends for the United States among ordinary people of the assisted countries. Sen. Mike Mansfield (D Mont.), successor to Vice President-elect Lyndon B. Johnson as Senate Majority Leader, expressed the misgivings held by many supporters of foreign aid when he spoke in the Senate (May 15, 1959) of the “burgeoning hostility between the American people who must foot the bill and the peoples of the recipient nations who sometimes, as distinct from their governments, see very little benefit from . . . the billions that have poured into their lands.”

⁴ Representatives of the Colorado Research Foundation participated also in a meeting in Washington, Dec. 20, called by Rep. Reuss to discuss the corps proposal with spokesmen for voluntary agencies, students and others.

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Mansfield attributed this state of affairs to the unavoidable emphasis of the Mutual Security Program on military aid and on development of basic economic facilities whose benefits are seldom evident to the mass of the people. Supporters of the Youth Corps plan believe that assignment of dedicated young Americans to physical labor in the hinterlands of the recipient countries would add the much needed human factor to the foreign aid program.

Rep. Reuss has written that it was "uneasiness about the flavor of our foreign aid program" that led him to offer his Point Four Youth Corps proposal in the House.

Too often we seem to emphasize military alliances with corrupt or reactionary leaders; furnishing military hardware which all too frequently is turned on the people of the country we are presumably helping; grandiose and massive projects; hordes of American officials living aloof in the country's capital. Would we not be farther along if we relied more heavily on a group of some thousands of young Americans willing to help with an irrigation project, digging a village well, or setting up a rural school?⁵

"Every congressman," Reuss had said earlier, "well knows that much of the idealism which animated the Marshall Plan and the original Point Four concept seems to have gone out of the aid program today."⁶ He felt that addition of young workers in the field would help to restore it.

OTHER POTENTIAL GAINS IN YOUTH SERVICE ABROAD

An important benefit to be gained from recruiting young people for work in underdeveloped countries would be to expand the supply of foreign aid manpower at relatively low cost. Approximately 6,000 Americans are now working overseas on International Cooperation Administration projects; Reuss has estimated that 10 times that number could be used solely on projects aimed to improve agricultural methods. There is large demand also for teachers to combat the illiteracy prevalent in most of the emerging countries. Reuss has estimated that it would cost around \$50 million to send 10,000 young people abroad—1/30th of the amount now being laid out each year for foreign economic aid.

Enlistment of young Americans for work at the grass roots of foreign aid would be expected to add something

⁵ Henry S. Reuss, "A Point Four Youth Corps," *Commonweal*, May 6, 1960, p. 146.

⁶ Speech before National Conference on International Economic and Social Development, Washington, April 27, 1960.

new and vital to the character of the technical assistance program. Most Americans serving with I.C.A. abroad are middle-aged or older; many are experienced specialists on leave from government posts or are retired college professors. They work chiefly at the planning level and deal mostly with high-ranking officials of the participating countries.

The very character of their assignments requires that they have a fund of experience. Even if a senior specialist wished to make closer contact with the people, the demands of his job and his status in the mission would bar his way. "After 45," Reuss has pointed out, "it often gets harder to work up enthusiasm about living in an Arab house, sipping tea in an African grass hut or playing volley ball with Indian students . . . [Yet] just this sort of neighborly living abroad is necessary if we want to get our ideas across to farmers and peasants."

Americans just out of college would lack the experience needed for supervisory posts in the technical aid program, but they could work on many small jobs which contribute to the well-being of a backward community. They would have the brawn and stamina to perform necessary physical labor, and they would be at the best age for adapting to relatively primitive living conditions. Dwelling among the natives as friends, sharing in their work and their recreations and privations, they would in all probability promote a genuine liking for America and Americans.

Another gain cited by supporters of the youth corps plan is that in the long run it would greatly enlarge the number of Americans who have intimate knowledge of conditions in the underdeveloped countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America and who can speak their languages. In the years ahead, the United States will have increasing need for experienced personnel with this kind of special knowledge. Veterans of a youth corps would constitute a well-stocked pool from which to draw such specialists in their maturity.

Reuss has noted that the emerging countries, especially those in Africa, are administered mainly by young people in their 20s and 30s. "This natural and unavoidable reliance on youth in countries from Guinea to Indonesia creates a sympathetic tie with young foreign visitors. . . .

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Almost inevitably it is the younger Americans in these countries who have made more friends and have had more influence among the people with whom they lived and worked." ⁷

Peace Corps and Technical Assistance

RECRUITMENT of young Americans for practical mission work overseas is not a new concept. A number of private organizations, mostly church-connected, have long supported undertakings of this kind. What is new in the current Peace Corps proposal is that it calls for federal sponsorship and financing of the youth missions as an integral part of the technical assistance program. The proposal therefore raises many questions for which answers are now being sought.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which approved the Peace Corps study bill without endorsing the corps idea itself,⁸ recommended that the scope of the study be left "completely open." But it felt that at least the following points should be covered: Types of projects in which young Americans would participate; how the projects would be carried out; how private organizations might co-operate; the relationship between the youth corps and the armed services; size of the corps, manner of its administration, personnel selection methods, training and orientation problems; and a review of how the corps could most usefully supplement existing programs of foreign assistance.

INTEGRATION OF CORPS INTO FOREIGN AID PROGRAM

In a "tentative guidance outline" for the organization receiving the study assignment, I.C.A. suggested that the main point to be considered was whether the corps would constitute a "practicable and feasible" way to attain the following goals: (1) Enhanced effectiveness of U.S. aid programs in underdeveloped countries; (2) better understanding in such countries of the motivations, ideals and

⁷ Henry S. Reuss, "A Point Four Youth Corps," *Commonweal*, May 6, 1960, p. 148.

⁸ The committee report stated: "The committee emphasizes that it is only a study which is involved here. The conclusions of the study can be considered on their own merits when the study is completed." The House Foreign Affairs Committee, on the other hand, said it believed there was "substantial merit" in the corps proposal.

aspirations of the United States; and (3) a similar understanding of the participating countries among young Americans. The study group was to consider whether these objectives might possibly be more readily attained by some other type of program.

Alternative procedures for reaching the goals, it was suggested, might be expansion of the basic I.C.A. program for technical cooperation or an increase in the number of I.C.A. contracts with private agencies employing youths in technical assistance projects. Instead of operating a Point Four youth program directly, the government might select a private agency to lead and coordinate the youth activities of the various voluntary organizations in this field, offering the operating groups financial assistance.

The study group was to survey at least a half-dozen foreign countries to determine whether they offered opportunities for useful work within the capabilities of the young recruits. To get this information, it would question both national and local officials of the foreign governments and Americans who had worked abroad. The precise nature of the jobs the young people would be expected to fill—in education, public health, community development, agricultural improvement, etc.—was to be described in detail. The study would go into probable duration of assignments, conditions of employment, compensation, and agencies to recruit and screen volunteers.

SERVICE IN A PEACE CORPS VS. MILITARY SERVICE

Of all questions raised by the proposal for a Youth Peace Corps, none is more controversial than the relationship of the program to the obligation of young male Americans to put in a period of service in the armed forces. Supporters of the program feel that civilian service in the corps would be an acceptable substitute for military duty, but they realize that to propose draft exemption for peace corpsmen might raise objections that would bar passage of the necessary legislation.

The point already has been raised that Peace Corps service might be regarded as an escape-hatch for draft dodgers, even though the nature of the service and the places where it would be performed might be expected to have little appeal for men of draft age on the lookout for a soft berth. The director of the corps study project,

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Maurice Albertson, has said that "an important concept of a youth program . . . will be that of a de-glamorized, rigorous, down-to-earth, minimum-pay program."

Gen. Lewis B. Hershey, Selective Service director, said on Dec. 19 that he strongly favored the Peace Corps plan but "let's keep the military service out of it." He warned that the proposal would run into trouble in Congress if the authorizing legislation set up a statutory exemption from the draft. Reuss agreed that draft exemption was not necessary. Albertson said the same day that the consensus appeared to be overwhelmingly against tying the Peace Corps to the draft, but that he would continue to explore the question.

Even without a statutory exemption, corps recruits would probably not be called for military service. Few of the young men who have served in similar posts for the voluntary agencies have subsequently been drafted. The usual practice is to defer them for the period of their college educations, then again for the period of their overseas service. By that time, they are so close to the top age limit for the draft that they are not likely to be called up. Hershey said most of the potential Peace Corps recruits would probably qualify for age, occupational or educational deferments.

An analysis prepared by the Legislative Reference Service of the Library of Congress when the youth corps study proposal was pending in Congress observed that it was "difficult to decide whether service in the Youth Corps should be planned and advertised as an elective alternative to regular draft military service." An advantage of the draft-alternative plan is that it would assure the Peace Corps a large pool of potential male recruits.⁹ Diversion of a thousand or more men a year to the Peace Corps would present no military manpower problem. Only 80,000 out of 1.2 million men reaching draft age each year are actually drafted.

VARIETY OF IDEAS FOR ORGANIZING A PEACE CORPS

Rep. Reuss has envisioned a youth corps eventually enlisting 10,000 recruits annually, none more than 25 years old, all recent college graduates with special skills in agri-

⁹ The Peace Corps plan, as now projected, makes no provision for recruitment of young women.

culture, home economics, public health, or related fields, all in peak physical trim and with a dedicated spirit of service. They would form small teams, headed by older, experienced leaders, to take on particular jobs in towns or rural areas of underdeveloped countries. The men would receive a private's pay—\$78-\$83 a month and expenses—and they would serve a hitch of two years.

Under the Humphrey bill, a maximum of 500 youths would be enlisted the first year, the number to be increased to a maximum of 5,000 annually by the fourth year. Those selected would be no younger than 21½, no older than 32; they would be required to have high qualifications in a particular field and would be expected to "demonstrate enthusiasm and dedication to the objectives of the Peace Corps." Service in the corps would constitute fulfillment of peacetime military obligations. Humphrey set the term of service at three years—one year more than the draftee's hitch. The first year would be devoted entirely to preparation. Recruits would remain in the United States for the first six months, receiving intensive instruction in three fields: the area to which they were assigned, the language of the country, and American foreign policy. The second six months of the first year would be spent in the foreign country, where the recruit would get more area and language instruction plus practical field training on the job for which he was slated.

Disagreement on the proper size of the corps developed at a conference with interested organizations called by Rep. Reuss on Dec. 20. Representatives of the Ford Foundation and of the International Voluntary Services said the corps should have no more than 500 to 1,000 members until the program was solidly established. A representative of Allied Industrial Workers, on the other hand, said that "We are kidding ourselves if we think we can make any contribution to world peace by starting with less than 5,000." Others at the conference proposed even larger numbers. A representative of the United Auto Workers said he was bothered by the concept of a small "élite" corps and thought large numbers should be sent over to dig ditches and do other plain work. He also raised the question of whether many young men could afford to spend several years at maintenance-pay work without assurance that they would not have to spend another two years in uniform.

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Opinions differed also on length of the term of service. An American Friends Service Committee representative said the experience of that organization showed that two years was the outside limit for effective contribution from a young person in overseas work camps. But others felt that three years would be the minimum required if the youths were to learn the language and be of real service.

WORK OF THE INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTARY SERVICES

Plans for a Peace Corps are patterned closely on the programs of half a hundred voluntary agencies engaged in "good works" abroad. The sponsors of bills in the last Congress cited the International Voluntary Services as affording a small-scale demonstration of the enormous good that could be accomplished by a broader program. The I.V.S. currently sponsors projects which enlist the services of 125 young workers in underdeveloped areas, and it normally has 10 applicants for every work team post to be filled.

The I.V.S. was incorporated in 1953 in response to a suggestion of the late Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. He proposed formation of a non-profit interdenominational organization to sponsor projects similar to those traditionally carried on by American missionaries in backward countries—but without any effort to proselytize foreign nationals.¹⁰ The organization is administered by a board composed of representatives of 15 Protestant denominations. I.V.S. organizes aid projects under contract with I.C.A. and with private organizations.

I.V.S. turned to young graduates of agricultural colleges to conduct operational programs because this group included large numbers with the skills, the physical stamina, the idealism, and the freedom from family responsibilities needed in such jobs. I.V.S. recruits must hold B.S. or M.S. degrees and be without dependents. They must have majored in or have had work experience that would prepare them for activity in agriculture, poultry and animal husbandry, youth clubs, refugee resettlement, horticultural experimentation, sanitation, home economics, public health, applied mechanics, road building, well-drilling, carpentry or education. They must be "willing to dedicate themselves

¹⁰ The suggestion was made during a meeting with church leaders which followed a broadcast address in which Dulles said the United States should tap the techniques and knowledge of voluntary agencies, which had been giving technical assistance to underdeveloped countries for more than a century.

to the task of assisting people regardless of color, creed or economic state," and must show the stability of character necessary for cooperative living and work under relatively primitive conditions.

Recruits must be willing to work with their hands. Some young women have met I.V.S. qualifications and in rare instances young married couples have been sent abroad, but it is primarily a program for single men. Each team is personally supervised by a mature leader who has administrative control of the project and acts as liaison with the host government.

I.V.S. volunteers agree to serve a two-year term. They are guaranteed all necessary expenses and are paid \$60-\$70 a month, with a one-month annual vacation. The I.V.S. program is reported to cost approximately \$6,000 per volunteer, including overhead. I.V.S. teams have served or are serving in eight countries: Cambodia, Egypt, Ghana, Iraq, Jordan, Laos, Nepal and South Vietnam.¹¹ The program, though limited, is reported to have paid large dividends by winning affection and respect for Americans, even in areas where there is considerable suspicion of the country's motives.

An international work camp program started by the American Friends Service Committee in 1920 was reactivated in Europe shortly after World War II. More recently, the program has been extended to Jamaica, Haiti, Israel, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Spain and Turkey, and extensions to countries in Africa and Asia are planned. Participants serve for three summer months and pay all their own expenses. They live in dormitory style with few comforts or conveniences; many engage in hard physical labor like land-clearing and road and building construction.

Thomas P. Melady, a 32-year-old consultant on African affairs, is working on plans to send 1,000 young men and women to Africa each year to fight the "triple curse" of poverty, illiteracy and disease. He hopes to form an organization to recruit college graduates and train them for such work. Volunteers would agree to serve two years. Melady said on Nov. 10 that the governments of 19 African nations had assured him of cooperation; their need for young teachers was particularly great.

¹¹ I.V.S. teams have cleared jungle, experimented with sowing vegetable and fiber crops, resettled refugees, dug wells, installed power generators, developed poultry-raising projects, and taught peasants how to maintain machinery.

Plan for Domestic Conservation Corps

UNLIKE the Youth Peace Corps, which would draw a selected number of young men from the annual crop of college graduates, the proposed Youth Conservation Corps would be manned by boys recently out of high school and not fully prepared to take their places in the nation's work force. Frankly modeled after the Civilian Conservation Corps of the New Deal era, the Youth Conservation Corps plan has garnered considerable support from conservationists and from authorities on juvenile problems. A dozen governors and the American Municipal Association also have endorsed the proposal.

A Youth Conservation Corps bill introduced by Sen. Humphrey was passed by the close vote of 47 to 45 in the Senate¹² on Aug. 13, 1959, and a hearing on it was held by a House subcommittee last April without further action. Nine bills to establish such a corps were introduced in the House at the 1960 session, and comparable bills are sure to be introduced in the new Congress.

PROVISIONS OF BILL APPROVED BY SENATE IN 1959

The bill approved by the Senate in 1959 would have authorized creation of a Federal Youth Conservation Corps, open to male volunteers between the ages of 16 and 21, to work on projects sponsored by federal and state conservation agencies. The boys would enlist for terms of six months and would be allowed to re-enlist for three additional terms, giving a maximum total service of two years. The measure called for a potential enrollment of 150,000 youths a year, at an estimated annual cost of between \$375 million and \$450 million. The states would pay half the costs of projects on state lands. The bill proposed to place the corps within the Department of Labor. A commission composed of the Secretary of Labor and representatives of three other federal departments—Agriculture, Interior, and Health-Education-Welfare—would have authority to pass on all phases of corps operations.

The Y.C.C. boys would help existing agencies in carrying out projects for conservation and development of nat-

¹² Voting for the bill were 45 Democrats and 2 Republicans (Wiley of Wisconsin and Young of North Dakota). Voting in the negative were 15 Democrats and 80 Republicans.

ural resources and for improvement of facilities in public recreational areas. Corps members would be paid \$60 a month (\$65 during re-enlistment terms); transportation, quarters, subsistence, equipment, clothing and medical care would be provided.

While the program would necessarily require establishment of camps in the field, where the boys would live dormitory-style, the bill did not preclude enlistment of youths who would live at home. Humphrey has pointed out that much conservation work could be done near settled communities, which could supply live-at-home manpower. The measure would not restrict corps membership to unmarried youths, as did the C.C.C. of New Deal days.

NEW DEAL YOUTH PROGRAMS OF DEPRESSION YEARS

The government programs that enlisted youths for civilian service during the F. D. Roosevelt administration were aimed primarily at relieving distress caused by the economic depression. The Civilian Conservation Corps was established by Congress in April 1933 to put young unemployed single men¹⁸ from families on public relief to work in forestry, park and soil-erosion projects. Two years later (June 26, 1935) F.D.R. created the National Youth Administration by executive order to give work to out-of-school youngsters who could find no place in the shrunken job market. Both programs operated solely within the United States and its territorial possessions, and both were terminated upon entry of the United States into World War II.

Today the work of the C.C.C. is better remembered than that of the N.Y.A., although the latter at times employed larger numbers of young people. Working in small units, often of no more than 15 to 20, N.Y.A. youths performed a kind of domestic Point Four service at a time when economic conditions in some parts of the United States differed little from those in underdeveloped countries today. N.Y.A. enrolled both boys and girls in jobs that ranged from clearing swamps to assisting in hospitals. They worked around 40 hours a month on an average and received pay ranging from \$6 to \$40 a month. For the most part, they lived at home. They did not wear distinctive uniforms or insignia, as did C.C.C. boys.

N.Y.A. youths in Minnesota constructed roadside 'parks;

¹⁸ Between the ages of 18 and 25 years (extended in 1935 to 17-28).

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in Rhode Island they rehabilitated a clubhouse for underprivileged children; in Kentucky they repaired rural schools; in Arizona they built facilities for tuberculosis patients; in Georgia they cleared land and quarried granite for a recreational structure; in West Virginia they built a footbridge across a swollen creek to give children access to a school. Other N.Y.A. youths helped restock fish hatcheries, distributed health information in back-country areas, made maps and other materials for schools, and landscaped parks.¹⁴

The C.C.C. was a much more tightly organized operation, carried on solely from camps in the field with corps units of around 200 men. It was administered jointly by the Departments of War, Interior and Agriculture, assisted by an advisory committee with a broad representation among federal departments and agencies. Projects were conducted in conjunction with established federal conservation agencies: the General Land Office, which supervised C.C.C. programs in Alaska and on timbered lands in the West; the Office of Indian Affairs, which used C.C.C. boys for work on reservations; the Bureau of Reclamation, which fought drought conditions in arid regions of the West; the Grazing Service, which opened up new public range lands; the Fish and Wildlife Service; and the National Park Service.

Over the nine years the C.C.C. was in operation, three million boys served in 4,500 different camps; at the peak, nearly 600,000 were enrolled. The work done by the C.C.C. in national parks is still evident to park visitors: roads, firebreaks, clearings, stone walls, buildings, picnic facilities, etc. According to the present Director of the Park Service, Conrad L. Wirth, who served on the C.C.C. advisory committee, the corps moved the park development program ahead by 50 years. The Reclamation Bureau reported in 1943 that the "fine work" of the corps had brought federal irrigation projects to a high standard of excellence and made it possible to meet wartime demands for increased agricultural production. The value of all improvements to public lands from C.C.C. activities has been estimated at \$1 $\frac{3}{4}$ billion.¹⁵

The program is believed to have had a tremendously bene-

¹⁴ Betty and Ernest K. Lindley, *A New Deal for Youth* (1938).

¹⁵ Senate Labor Committee, *Report on Youth Conservation Act of 1959* (1959), p. 13. Projects carried out by the corps included 33,550 bridges, 3,359 buildings, 28.7 million rods of fences, 88,883 miles of telephone line, tree seeding on 2.3 million acres, 126,000 miles of truck trails, etc.

ficial effect on the participants, many of whom had never before been out of a city. The skills they learned in camp—driving trucks and tractors, road and stone work, repairing and maintaining machinery, carpentry—proved invaluable to the wartime army. Among today's supporters of the proposed Youth Conservation Corps are many who recall with satisfaction their own service as youngsters in the C.C.C.

CONSERVATION NEEDS IN THE 1930S AND AT PRESENT

Few persons doubt now that the C.C.C. filled a pressing need in the dark days of the depression. There is some question, however, whether a similar corps is needed at the present time. When the Humphrey bill was before the Senate Labor Committee two years ago, the heads of federal departments that would be concerned with the program wrote to the committee chairman to register opposition to the measure, but they did not send any witnesses to testify against it.

Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Arthur S. Flemming wrote that while "the Civilian Conservation Corps unquestionably served a very useful purpose . . . the situation today . . . is far from comparable." He felt that "Our efforts and resources should be concentrated on increasing the educational opportunities for our youth, on the use of available vocational educational funds, . . . on assuring that youth are afforded adequate opportunity to become employed in available jobs."

Agriculture Secretary Ezra Taft Benson noted that the federal government was "already heavily engaged in programs for the development and conservation of natural resources." Acting Secretary of the Interior Elmer F. Bennett likewise thought that the conservation objectives of the program "may be realized, to the extent warranted by circumstances, within the framework of existing conservation programs."

Supporters of a Youth Conservation Corps nevertheless insist that it would meet two pressing needs: (1) to step up present conservation programs and (2) to provide constructive, character-building work for the growing number of boys not in school who have little prospect of finding steady jobs. The idle boys on city streets appear to be a logical source of manpower for the labor required to carry

Government Youth Corps

out a large-scale conservation program. Such a program, its advocates contend, would have the advantage of conserving both the physical and the human resources of the nation.

A study in 1958 by the Citizens' Committee on Natural Resources said that there was need for a C.C.C. type of conservation program costing around \$10 billion over a 10-year period. Tasks would include reforestation of 28 million acres; timber stand improvement on 140 million acres; expansion of fire protection for 200 million acres; soil and watershed conservation measures on 300 million farm acres; clearing, irrigation and replanting of large parts of 200 million acres of federal grazing lands; establishment and refurbishing of recreational facilities in public parks; and improvement and expansion of wildlife refuges.

Promoters of the Youth Conservation Corps plan lay great stress on a report, *Program for the National Forests*, issued by the Department of Agriculture in April 1959. That document pointed to a rising demand for timber products and a need to improve federal forest lands not only for protection of forest products but also for recreational purposes and for conservation of water supplies. The report outlined a conservation program which would include many projects that could be carried out by contingents of the proposed youth corps. Members of the corps might perform useful service also in the National Park Service's "Mission 66," a 10-year program initiated in 1956 to put the national park in condition to accommodate adequately the 80 million visitors a year expected by 1966.

CONSERVATION CORPS AID IN EASING YOUTH PROBLEMS

Growing unemployment and the juvenile delinquency problem give added impetus to demands for revival of a conservation corps. The Bureau of Labor Statistics has reported that the rate of unemployment among teen-agers is three times the overall national average. Job opportunities for youths 16-19 years old have diminished with rising demand for skilled rather than unskilled labor. Meanwhile, the number of adolescents is rising; by 1964 the under-20 labor force is expected to have grown by 40 per cent.¹⁶ Service in a Youth Conservation Corps not only

¹⁶ Henry David, executive director of the National Manpower Council of Columbia University, told a Senate subcommittee on Dec. 16 that the increasing number of 19-year-olds—due to rise from 2.6 million in 1960 to 3.8 million in 1965—poses the country's most serious employment problem.

would keep these near-unemployables out of the labor market; it would enable them to acquire skills that would make it easier to find jobs later.

Advocates of the corps program see in it an effective antidote to delinquent behavior among adolescents. Conservation camps for rehabilitation of youthful offenders in a number of states have strengthened the concept of the proposed federal camp program as an anti-delinquency measure.¹⁷ However, the present corps plan, like the C.C.C. before it, was not proposed as a weapon for cutting down delinquency. The Senate committee report on the Humphrey bill pointed out that the Youth Conservation Corps was "not designed as a cure for juvenile delinquency by which hard-pressed communities can dispose of their juvenile problems by exiling them to distant . . . regions." At the same time, the committee said, the program could be properly termed a "preventive measure."

The late Sen. Thomas C. Hennings, Jr. (D Mo.), chairman of the Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency, observed at hearings on the Humphrey bill in 1959:

While this is not a program specifically designed to prevent delinquency, it undoubtedly will have the effect of keeping large numbers of young unemployed, socially deprived children from turning to a life of delinquency and crime. . . . One of the most important features of this type of program is that it offers young people work that is important and meaningful to both the participants and the community.

Even more important than the skills learned, advocates of the program say, would be the influence of the corps in fostering good habits of work and a sense of purpose among its members. "Putting the boys on the land, putting them to work on . . . patriotic undertakings," said Humphrey, "would do more for America in terms of our nation's mental health and physical fitness than even the important resource-conservation work."

¹⁷ New York Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller called on Dec. 11 for a state appropriation of \$850,000 to launch a program, authorized by the legislature last year, for youth work camps to rehabilitate young offenders and provide "opportunity" facilities for volunteers who, while not yet court cases, have been referred by public or private agencies as potential delinquents.



